

WRC-TV and

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PROGRAM

Today

STATION

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DATE

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CITY

Washington, D.C.

FRANK BLAIR: "As you know in the past few days, the big question in the news is, is Cuba still a threat to our security and the security of this hemisphere? Well the administration says no, in effect, and the other side says yes. We asked two Senators to discuss this important issue with us this morning. They are in our Washington studios now with Martin Agronsky. They are Kenneth Keating, the New York Republican, and leading critic of the administration on this issue, and the Mississippi Democrat John Stennis. It's Senator Stennis' Preparedness Committee, which is looking into the Cuban situation now. They are all in Washington, we take you there, and here's Martin Agronsky."

MARTIN AGRONSKY WAS SEEN ON THE TV SCREEN,  
SEATED IN THE WASHINGTON STUDIO WITH GUESTS  
SENATOR KEATING AND SENATOR STENNIS.

AGRONSKY: "Good morning, Hugh. Senator Stennis, I wonder if we can begin with you. As the Chairman of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee that is now looking into the Cuban crisis. For the past two days, Senator, you have been hearing the testimony of the Central Intelligence Agency's Director John McCone on the extent of the Soviet military buildup in Cuba. Do you accept the contention of President Kennedy and of the Secretary of Defense, Mr. McNamara, that as of today, Soviet military and missile forces in Cuba do not present an offensive threat to the United States?"

STENNIS: "Well first, Martin, I want to make crystal clear the cruxes of our investigation, our Subcommittee, and the way I speak for them--this is a determined effort on our part, on a non-political basis, just to get the real hard facts of life. With reference to what is in Cuba, and what it means, and what menace it is now, as well as in the future to the United States

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as well as our American allies. Now I don't make much clear distinction between the offensive and defensive weapons as such-- even the least estimates make clear that there is a very formidable military force there that can quickly become so strong that it could cut off our surveillance, and thereby be enabled to rapidly grow, without our detection, bringing back in missiles.

"Now, I think right now there's not enough military force there to invade the United States. Insofar as the missiles that were there being gone, we don't know about that yet, we're going to try to find out more about it, but we've just had one witness and that's Mr. McCone, an excellent one who's very frank with us, and I know there's a menace and a threat to the United States to a degree and in the future, but so far as it being an immediate threat from missiles, why we don't have evidence of that effect yet."

AGRONSKY: "Senator Keating, do you feel there is evidence to the effect that there is an immediate threat to the United States by missiles? Senator Stennis says he does not feel there is evidence to that effect."

STENNIS: "I said we had no evidence of that, yet--"

KEATING: "I certainly have no knowledge of the existence of ground-to-ground missiles in Cuba. I've never said so, and I have no evidence of that. No hard evidence. I think that, as Senator Stennis has said, there is a lack of evidence on that point. We have had evidence presented to us that 42 missiles have been taken out. We've had no evidence as to the number brought in. I do not mean to imply by that that there are some there. I just don't know. And I don't consider that this is a direct threat to the United States in a sense that we can expect an invasion from Cuba. I think it is a threat to the other Latin American countries, but I couldn't disagree with any statement that Senator Stennis has made.

"And I want to say this right now, that we in the Senate feel that this investigation couldn't be in better hands than Senator Stennis and his nine associates. He's highly respected, as are the other members of this committee, and their findings will be very valuable to all of us."

STENNIS: "Thank you, Senator, on behalf of all of us, and

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we appreciate your help too."

AGRONSKY: "Now, Senator Keating, President Kennedy said yesterday that while--and I use his words now--there is still a body of Soviet military equipment and technicians in Cuba which is of serious concern to our government and the hemisphere, that since the removal of Soviet offensive weapons, as Khrushchev pledged, there has not been an addition of offensive weapons, and there has indeed been a subtraction of some 4500 Soviet military personnel. It is on this that he bases his feeling that the threat has decreased.

"Do you have any information, sir, to the contrary?"

KEATING: "Yes, and it has--and I'm sure that the President mis-spoke if you indicate from that that there have been no arms brought in since October, because we were shown pictures of one ship which contained nothing but arms, and they said there was another one on the high seas, with nothing but arms. Then it was said that other ships that have come in did not have a quote 'significant' amount of arms. Now people can differ about what is significant. I think it's very important, and I'm sure that Senator Stennis' committee will find out--or try to find out--what was in those other ships. I have made the statement that arms have come into Cuba since October. There has been a continuing military buildup in Cuba--an increased military buildup--since July first of last year up to the present time. The number of soldiers has increased from 500 then--according to the administration--to 17,000 now. There has been a great increase in weapons, and I certainly agree with the statement of Senator Stennis that you cannot draw this hard and fast distinction between offensive and defensive weapons. It depends on who holds the gun, whether it's offensive or defensive."

AGRONSKY: "Well, gentlemen, let me address this question to both of you. Senator, Keating, do you have any information about what the Russians are doing in Cuba, which leads you to feel that the threat they pose to the United States is greater than the President of the United States thinks it is?"

KEATING: "Well I don't know the thinking of the mind of the President of the United States--"

AGRONSKY: "What do you think?"

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KEATING: "Well I think that there is a serious threat to the Western hemisphere posed by the increased military buildup in Cuba. Now I've divorced myself from any contention or statement that I expect them to invade the United States of America. That's ridiculous in my judgment--"

AGRONSKY: "Or to attack the United States."

KEATING: "They will not attack directly the United States of America, at this time."

AGRONSKY: "Do you think they might attack in other Latin American nations?"

KEATING: "That I don't know."

AGRONSKY: "Why are you concerned about them?"

KEATING: "I'm concerned about the fact that there is an increased amount of military equipment there, and that the military forces there have increased from 500 to 17,000 of whom many of them are combat troops, and I want to know what they're doing there-- why are they there now?"

STENNIS: "Let me answer the question this way. We all agree that at least 17,000 Russian troops are there, with the finest possible equipment. air power, ground power, tanks, planes-- everything. That within itself is a menace of many proportions. One is that our neighbor nations are subject to infiltration, sabotage, a base of operations for it, and even invasion. And carry it a step further, if the Russians stay there on this island, these weapons are in Russian hands--they can make it impenetrable where we can't have any surveillance and know what is there, and then they can bring in missiles--sneak them in almost with impunity. And all agree that this is a threat. Let's not argue about numbers so much--or what's offensive or defensive; it's Russian military might, rapidly becoming the second strongest military power in the Western hemisphere, and of course the President is concerned. Everyone is. We're going to try to develop these facts as far as we can from witnesses under oath, so that we'll have a legislative opinion, and maybe can contribute them to a hard foreign policy that I personally believe is absolutely necessary. There's no time to be lost, and could lead to a demand to take all of them out.

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The same as we demanded that they take the missiles out."

DOWNS: "May I ask Senator Keating, gentlemen. President Kennedy has said that he too is seriously concerned about the continuing presence of Soviet military personnel and equipment in Cuba. But he also said, here's a quote of his, he said 'If anybody has information with regard to the presence of offensive weapon systems, or indeed the presence of any military force or weapons on the island of Cuba, I think they should make it available to General Carroll (?) who is in charge of intelligence for the Defense Department.' Now is there any information that you have on either of these categories that is not available to the President?"

KEATING: "I don't think I have any information, Hugh, which is not available to the President. I do have a meeting today with Mr. McCone, who is coming to see me. I have some recommendations as to what should be done, and I will be happy to present those to him. I think I should present them to him, as a representative of the President before they are publicly discussed."

AGRONSKY: "Senator Keating, if you were to define any difference that exists between you and the President on the issue of Cuba, how would you define it?"

KEATING: "I think the difference has been probably exaggerated. I don't know what's going on in his mind. I don't think there's any difference as to the facts that are available to both of us. There may be a difference, as I believe that there probably was last October, and that time about the significance of them, and I won't say the seriousness, because I'm sure he considers it serious, but the interpretation which is to be put upon them. I have certain things that I think ought to be done--based on what I know. He may have a difference of opinion--."

AGRONSKY: "We'll come back to that in a moment..."

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DOWNS: "We want to switch back to Washington in just a moment, with Senators Keating and Stennis on the subject of military might of the Soviet Union in Cuba. The bone of contention seems to be, largely, whether or not Soviet military might in Cuba is increasing

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or decreasing, and if we're all set in Washington, let me start; I'd like to ask Senator Keating if he would agree that that is what the argument is about. You seem to feel that even though there is no threat of invasion to the United States, there is some increase going on in Soviet might in Cuba, and the administration seems to feel that it's decreasing slowly. Is that correct, sir?"

KEATING: "Well, except that there are figures which show the increase. They have told us how many troops were there then, and how many are here now. They have said in executive sessions, I understand, what equipment has come in and has not been made public, but certainly it is a greater amount, and I have made the statement that their might is now ten times what it was last July first, and that's on the assumption that the missiles and bombers have been taken out of there, that their might in other respects is ten times greater, and certainly in their personnel--their soldiers--it's much more than 10 times more."

DOWNS: "Martin, I just wanted to follow that--Senator Keating yesterday said he hoped the President will soon announce certain steps to deal with the continued intrusion of communism into our hemisphere. I just wonder if you think in your mind, he has taken such a step with the note to Khrushchev, inquiring when there would be removal of the troops now in Cuba?"

KEATING: "Well I certainly hope that that continues, and that the insistence on the removal of the troops is continued, and he has taken a short step in the issuance of this executive order which many of us--with regard to shipping of commercial goods--which many of us have felt should have been done before this."

AGRONSKY: "Senator Keating, you said you hoped the President--will repeat the question of Mr. Downs--will announce further steps. What further steps do you have in mind?"

KEATING: "Well, Martin, I have felt that the responsible way to do that, is to talk with the President or with someone in authority. I have some very definite ideas in my own mind that I think should know, because my feeling is that if I think Plan A is the right plan, and the President comes out with Plan B, I'm going to be for Plan B, as long as it is a firm statement--on the night of the 22nd of October, I said I would be behind the President 100 per cent--that is still my position. It will continue to be my position, as long as that is a firm stand in Cuba. And I do not

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want to impede or harrass him in any way in the determination of what should be done. I'm going to present my views to Mr. McCone--"

AGRONSKY: "May I point this out to both of you gentlemen-- yes, Senator Stennis, I'm sorry--"

STENNIS: "Well, I think the main thing is to recognize the problem with its full impact now--that it's real--and it would be premature for me to try to give a solution now, but I think we're running head-on into this matter--there must be a decision, within months perhaps; diplomatic solutions, we hope, but it must be pursued to the ultimate."

AGRONSKY: "Well the President pointed out yesterday that this is a question of peace and war, and he made it very clear that he feels that he has the responsibility. Neither one of you are recommending an invasion of Cuba, certainly, or any outright act of military action of that nature?"

KEATING: "Well I certainly am not."

STENNIS: "Certainly not now--no."

AGRONSKY: "Well, gentlemen, I think that's about as far as we can carry it. I presume you'll carry it further with Mr. McCone this afternoon, Senator Keating. Thank you very much, Hugh."

DOWNS: "Thank you, Martin, and our thanks to Senator Stennis and Senator Keating for being with us this morning on this issue of Soviet military might in Cuba. The news will be brought to you every day on Today..."